

Flourishing as the Friends of Jesus

(who really like jazz!)

December 21, 2017



*There's a fragrance much like hope
That it sends upon the wind
Reaching out to every soul
From a lowly manger's crib
(verse from Rose of Bethlehem)*

I had not heard *Rose of Bethlehem*
until last Friday when Jill and I heard the Queens
down at Frankie's Jazz Club.

This is the verse that stood out for me.
The idea of hope wafting like the fragrance of a rose
over every soul comforts me deeply.
But the God who came to be with us and for us
in this working-class babe then grew up to be a disruptive rabbi,
one who angered the authorities so much that they executed him.

It's this kind of stark paradox –
the fragrance of the rose and the stench of the execution –
that followers of Jesus live with
in these days of mayhem and madness.

The only sense that can be found in this paradox
is the sense made of it by the glory/energy of God's unique love.

In Jesus, whose birth we celebrate this week,
that love comes to find us, then dies to save us,
then lives on to give us hope.
And the fragrance of that hope cannot be overcome
by the stench of death in any form.

What Is This Evensong Thing?

Evensong is a service of worship,
a means of paying tribute through song and prayer
to the divine energy that we Christians consider
the source of our being.

We come to know the love that inspires this God
most clearly in the life of Jesus,
the One through whom God redeemed
the beloved creation to its original purpose.
That love continues to inspire all of us
through the work of God's Holy Spirit,
a dynamic we believe is at work in our world
whether we recognize it or not.

Worship is an experience
where this God encounters us with that love
in ways most suited to nourishing our flourishing.

The evensong tradition of worship
can be traced back to the Jewish synagogue,
then through Christian monasteries,
then through the Anglican Prayer Books
of Thomas Cramner (1489-1556).

It has been adapted and improvised on
down through the ages,
but always with the intent of
refreshing the soul and informing the mind.

We trust something of this kind of inspiration
will be yours this evening.

Thank you so much
for blessing us with your presence this evening.